

What is claimed is:

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comprising:

1. A method of setting up a call between a subscriber premises and a call center, comprising:
 - receiving a call set up request from a gateway responsive to the subscriber premises;
 - sending a query to the call center;
 - receiving an availability reply from the call center; and
 - preparing a call set up instruction for setting up the call between the subscriber premises and the call center.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a call path between the subscriber premises and the call center.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein a network switch provides the call path in response to the call set up instruction.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein providing a call path includes placing a call to the subscriber premises.
- ~~5. The method of claim 2, wherein providing a call path includes placing a call to the call center.~~
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6. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving an unavailability reply from the call center before receiving the availability reply, estimating the time-in-queue until the call center will be available to receive the call, and preparing a call queue status message for delivery to the gateway.

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7. The method of claim 6, further comprising sending the call queue status message to the gateway for delivery to the subscriber premises.

8. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

receiving an agent available notice from the call center, and

preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway.

9. The method of claim 6, further comprising preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway after receiving the availability reply.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the subscriber premises includes a computer for communicating with the gateway, and a telephone for communicating with the call center.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising preparing a call connection message relating to the call being set up between the subscriber premises and the call center.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising sending the call connection message to the gateway for delivery to the subscriber premises.

13. An apparatus for setting up a call between a subscriber premises and a call center, comprising:

means for receiving a call set up request from a gateway responsive to the subscriber premises;

means for sending a query to the call center;

means for receiving an availability reply from the call center; and

means for preparing a call set up instruction for setting up the call between the subscriber premises and the call center.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising a network switch for providing a call path between the subscriber premises and the call center in response to the call set up instruction.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the network switch places a call to the subscriber premises.

16. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the network switch places a call to the call center.

17. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising means for receiving an unavailability reply from the call center before receiving the availability reply, means for estimating the time-in-queue until the call center will be available to receive the call, and means for preparing a call queue status message for delivery to the gateway.

Sub A4 18. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising means for sending the call queue status message to the gateway for delivery to the subscriber premises.

19. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising:
means for receiving an agent available notice from the call center, and
means for preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway.

20. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising means for preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway after receiving the availability reply.

21. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the subscriber premises includes a computer for communicating with the gateway, and a telephone for communicating with the call center station.

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22. The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising means for preparing a call connection message relating to the call being set up between the subscriber premises and the call center.

23. The apparatus of claim 22, further comprising means for delivering the call connection message to the gateway for delivery to the subscriber premises.

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